

CHRIST ever present with his
FAITHFUL ministers.

A
S E R M O N
AT THE
ORDINATION

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Of the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN FOLLIE,

AND

Mr. MATTHEW JACKSON.

Preached in

WESTMINSTER,

JULY 23, 1746.

By G. HUGHES, D. D.

“Minister verbi es, non tantum age, sed hoc age.”

Mr. PERKINS'S Motto.

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THERTON, in *Cornhil*; J. BUCKLAND, in
Pater-noster Row; J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's*
Head in *Gracechurch-street*; and J. HIGHMORE,
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MR. JOHN W. JOLLA
AND
MR. MATTHEW JACKSON

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WESTMINSTER
JULY 23. 1746.

By G. HUGHES, D.D.

Minister of the Gospel, non tamen agere sed docere.
MR. PERKINS'S MIND.

LONDON:
Printed for R. HART, in the Strand; J. BARN-
THERTON, in Cornhill; J. BUCKLAND, in
Fleet-street; J. WOOD, at the Sign of
the Green; J. HICKMAN, and J. HICKMAN,
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[Price Six-Pence.]

To the REVEREND

Mr. JOHN JOLLIE,

AND

Mr. MATTHEW JACKSON.

My dear Brethren!

THE following sermon is in a manner forced into the world, by the importunity of *yourselves*, and of many *others*, who either assisted *in* your ordination, or were present *at* it. Their declared apprehension, that it might *do good*, extorted my compliance. If this effect be produced, my end is quite answered.

I TAKE the liberty to inscribe it to you; and am pleased with this opportunity of publicly testifying my sincere respect for you both.

THE providence of God has lately made several affecting breaches, in re-

A 2 moving

iv DEDICATION.

moving some very useful ministers from amongst us *; their days of labour are ended, and they are gone to their reward. We congratulate the advantageous improvement of *their* circumstances by an exchange of worlds; at the same time we are sensibly affected with *our own* and the *churches* loss.

IT is a relieving consideration however, that GOD is raising up other ministers in the room of those, who are *already* departed; and such as, I hope, will be doing eminent service in the *church* of CHRIST, when *many* of *us* also, who yet remain, *shall be gathered to our fathers*.

I DOUBT not, my friends, but you will frequently reflect upon the solemnities of *that day*, when you devoted yourselves to the service of GOD in the gospel of his SON, and were

* The reverend Mr. John Oakes, Dr. Samuel Wright, Mr. Joshua Bayes, Mr. George Smyth, and Mr. John Cander; all in the compass of a few months.

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were separated, set apart, and ordained to the *ministerial office*. You need not be told by me, that the sacred work, you are engaged in, is of the greatest consequence; and I persuade myself, that each of you *will take heed to the ministry, which ye have received in the LORD, that ye fulfill it, and make full proof of it; magnifying your office in every place, where providence shall cast your lots; be it in a foreign country †, or in your own native land ‡.*

AND

† N. B. Mr. JOHN JOLLIE has been unanimously chosen by the *English church at Rotterdam in Holland*, to be their minister, and to execute the pastoral office jointly with the *reverend, and worthy Mr. BARTHOLOMEW LOFTUS*; who has for many years, with great diligence and faithfulness, laboured in the service of their souls. May this *younger minister come unto them in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of CHRIST!* May he long, as a son with the father serve with his venerable colleague in the gospel! And may both of them have many seals to their ministry!

‡ Mr. MATTHEW JACKSON, some time since settled at *Medhurst in Sussex*, as pastor to a small congregation of serious christians, amongst whom he labours with much *acceptance*; and I hope, will continue to do so, with increasing *usefulness and comfort*.

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AND though your *furniture* for the ministerial work be very considerable ; yet I know you will be always aiming at greater *improvements*. Let me borrow a passage from a late *pious* and *devout* gentleman ; who by many excellent writings, endeavoured to promote serious religion and practical godliness in the world : and both *ministers* and *private christians*, persons of *all ranks* might grow wiser and better, by attending to his grave, solemn and pathetic addresses. “ That man (says “ he) knoweth but little of the dignity and importance of the *priest-* “ *hood*, that can content himself “ with ordinary attainments for the “ discharge of so great and so sacred “ a trust : and yet he will find himself very much deceived, if he “ dependeth upon the greatest perfection of human knowledge, without continual and fervent prayer “ to God for his grace to enable “ him

DEDICATION. vii

“ him to make a right use of it.
“ This is necessary to sanctify his
“ learning, though it be of never
“ so prodigious a size; by keeping
“ him within the bounds of humili-
“ ty, and by rendering him service-
“ able to those, who are committed
“ to his charge &.”

I MOST earnestly wish you, my dear friends, much of that *spiritual* presence of CHRIST, which he has promised to all faithful ministers of his gospel: you will not cease by importunate fervent prayer to solicit this great blessing: and I trust you will constantly feel the powerful *efficacy* of it, in liberal and daily supplies both of the *graces* and of the *comforts* of the HOLY SPIRIT; *those* to furnish you more *for* the important service, and *these* to animate and encourage you *in* it.

FOR

§ Life of Bishop Bull, by Robert Nelson, Esquire, pag. 21.

viii DEDICATION.

FOR this purpose I commend you both to the favour of God; subscribing myself, with much respect,

DEAR SIRs,

Your affectionate friend,

and brother in the

gospel of CHRIST,

Hampstead, *August*

23, 1746. ||

©. HUGHES.

|| The *Eve* of a memorable day, justly called BLACK St. *Bartholomew*; on which day 1662, no less than 2000 ministers were silenced and ejected from their livings by the *Act of Uniformity*; though many of them were amongst the *most learned*, and all of them as remarkable for *piety, seriousness, zeal for God and for the souls of men*, as any ministers in the land: — Men they were, of whom the world was not worthy. — It is an honour to be descended from such pious ancestors! May their posterity inherit the same christian spirit! And serve their great master with equal faithfulness, integrity and zeal!

M A T T. XXVIII. 18, 19, 20.

And JESUS came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. AMEN!

OUR blessed SAVIOUR, after his resurrection, appeared several times to his disciples. The interview with them, which the text refers to, was upon a mountain in Galilee *: this Christ himself appointed before his death †. At this meeting,

B

CHRIST

* † 16. *sup.* † Mat. xxvi. 32. and Mark xiv. 28.

2 CHRIST *ever present*

CHRIST delivered those awful and important words, which I have now read; as proper to be considered, upon occasion of the solemn service we have now before us.

IN which words we may take notice of *three* principal things; namely,

I. CHRIST gives an express and full declaration of his own authority and universal power, as MEDIATOR: *All power, &c.*

II. IN virtue of this power and authority, CHRIST delivers out a commission to his apostles; which was *threefold*; —

(1.) To go into *all nations*, and by *preaching the gospel* to bring over men to the profession of the christian faith. —

(2.) To enter such professors into the number of his *disciples*, by the initiating rite of *baptism*; the visible sign and seal of the christian covenant. —

(3.) Afterwards to *teach* them the whole mind and will of Christ; as far as he had *already* revealed it, or should *hereafter* communicate it to *them*.

THIS was the charge or *commission*, which Christ gave to them: He then adds,

III. A

with *his faithful ministers.* 3

III. A MOST gracious promise of his presence with them at all times; *lo! I am with you alway even to the end of the world.*

IT is the *last* of these, that I shall distinctly enlarge upon: And would only premise this one thing *viz.* that tho' this promise was *primarily* made by Christ to the *eleven* disciples, whom he had called to be his *apostles*, and who were the *prime ministers* in his kingdom; yet the promise is not *limited* to them, but is designed for the comfort of the ministers of the gospel, in *every succeeding age* of the world, to the very *end* of time. And a most comfortable promise it is! Sufficient to excite our courage, and make us chearfully to engage in our great master's service, notwithstanding the labours and trials, that attend it. "I shall have
" my master *with* me; he will not leave
" me to myself; and he is invested with *all*
" power in *heaven and earth*, he is sovereign
" LORD of all: — What need I *fear*?
" What cannot I *do*? The difficulty of my
" work shall not discourage me; for I *can*
" do all things *through CHRIST, which*
" *strengtheneth me* * : nor shall dangers and

B 2

" trou-

* Phil. iv. 13.

4 CHRIST *ever present*

"troubles affrighten me, *none of these things shall move me*†; *I shall be more than conqueror through him, that loved me*‡." If CHRIST be with us, we shall be *equal* to our work, and *superior* to all opposition: And *this* he has promised.

IN the prosecution of this subject, I shall suggest a few hints under the following particulars; *viz.*

1. THE *benefit* promised.
 2. THE *persons*, to whom it is promised.
 3. WHAT we are to understand by *always, even unto the end of the world.* —
- And then
4. I SHALL conclude with a proper improvement of the whole.

OF each in its order. —

- I. THE *benefit*, here promised, is the presence of Christ; *I am with you.*

CHRIST was just at this time ready to be removed from them; and actually was so within a few days; he met them afterwards at mount *Olivet*, about two or three miles

† Acts xx. 24. ‡ Rom. viii. 37.

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miles from *Jerusalem*; and there took his last solemn farewell of them; So then after the LORD had spoken unto them, and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of GOD †.——And the heaven must retain him, untill the times of restitution of all things ‡; i. e. to the very end of the world.——And yet at this juncture, CHRIST gives them the assurance of his being still with them; and to make the promise more striking and emphatical, he expresses it in the present tense; he does not say, *I will be with you*; but *I am with you* *. q. d. “you shall find me “as effectually present with you, as if my “body never removed nor changed place of “residence.”

If it be here enquired, what we are to understand by this expression [*I am with you*] and what it imports; I answer,

It directly signifies a spiritual presence of CHRIST with his disciples; or, that he would be with them by the influences of his HOLY SPIRIT. Our dear redeemer was now going to receive his own reward; and even our interest called him into another world;

† Mark xvi. 19. and Luke xxiv. 21. ‡ Acts iii. 22.

* Εγὼ μετ' ὑμῶν εἰμι.

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world; *it is expedient for you*, says he, *that I go away* *. When he had finished the suffering part of his work here *below*; he had other work, very needful for us, to be performed *above*: but yet he did not think it fit, that we should be left alone, as *orphans* and *comfortless*.—therefore the HOLY SPIRIT was sent to supply *his* place. While our blessed LORD was in this world, he promised *to pray the father, to give his disciples and church another Comforter*, instead of *himself* †: one, who by his *gifts* and *graces* should provide for the remaining interests of his church on earth; one, who by his *influences* would lead them into the paths of life and righteousness; and refresh their minds, when in distress and sadness, with his sovereign tho' *bidden consolations*. The *Greek* word || signifies *both*; not only a *comforter*, but also one, who acts the part of a *monitor*, advising and exhorting and stirring up to that which is good: and both these are branches of the *office* of the HOLY SPIRIT ‡; and the *ways*, in which HE *acts* towards all good christians.

AND

* John xvi. 7. † John xiv. 16. || Παράκλητον.
‡ V. Stockii clav. p. 534. V. 2.

with *his faithful ministers.* 7

AND this may very fitly be called CHRIST'S *being with us* : so he himself calls it : having made a promise to his disciples, that upon his own remove from them, he would immediately send the HOLY SPIRIT, he adds, *I will not leave you comfortless* ; i. e. as fatherless children, having no parents to advise or provide for their comfort ; *I will come to you* † ; i. e. by the SPIRIT whom I will send : q. d. “ Tho’ I leave you in my *visible presence*, yet I will come again to you, “ and will always continue with you in a “ way more for your advantage, i. e. by the “ HOLY SPIRIT.”

OUR dear redeemer by his death *purchased* the SPIRIT ; he was *made a curse for us*, — that we might receive the promise of the SPIRIT thro’ faith ‡. When CHRIST entered upon his kingdom, and ascended into his glory, he *sent down the comforter from the father*, according to his promise ||. He is given to supply CHRIST’S room, and to carry on the same *saving design*, which the redeemer set on foot in our world.

UPON all these accounts, with the highest propriety CHRIST may be said to *be still with us*, by the agency of his SPIRIT.

BEFORE

† John xiv. 18. ‡ Gal. iii. 13, 14. || John xv. 26.

BEFORE I dismiss this head, I would mention *two* things, implied in this *spiritual* presence of CHRIST with his ministers: namely,

I. IT imports CHRIST's constant *friendly disposition and regard* to them.

"I AM with you, or on your side, as
 "your hearty friend, and faithful allie; not
 "against you, nor will I stand *neuter* in your
 "concerns. All that I have *suffered* for you,
 "has not in the least cooled my affection;
 "nor will the *glory* I am just entering upon,
 "or *distance* of place, ever influence me to
 "be unmindful of you. When I am ascended
 "to my father in heaven, my *heart* will still
 "be with you on earth, and I shall ever
 "be touched with the feeling of your infirmi-
 "ties *." It is a very frequent *phrase* in the
 sacred writings, that GOD *is*, or *will be*, with
 this or the other person; and GOD has often
promised this, in order to encourage his ser-
 vants to undertake the work, which he has
 appointed them, without demur or uneasi-
 ness †. The meaning is the same, as in
 the

* Judg. vi. 12, 13. Jer. i. 8. Acts vii. 9, &c.

† Heb. iv. 15.

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the text; that they should experience the favour and friendship of God, in every way suitable to the exigency of their circumstances: he will bear them in his thoughts; to shew them all the favour, and do them all the kind offices, which his affection will prompt him to, and which their case may require.

NOR is this a small mercy, to have such an *able*, such a *kind* and such a *faithful* friend always at hand, ready to give us proper help upon all emergencies. How great a blessing is this!

II. CHRIST'S *spiritual* presence with gospel - ministers does further import his *powerful* and *efficacious influences*; as much as could be expected, if He was *visibly* with them †.

I AM with you; q. d. “ though from
“ this time ye see me no more with the eyes
“ of your bodies; yet ye shall see and feel
“ those beneficial effects of my love and
“ power

† Abiturus in cælum; nec adero vobis spectabili modo; sed adero vobis divina efficacia. *Grot ad loc.*
Auxilio meo, quod præsentiam suam vocat. *Maldo-*
nat. Menoch. & Alii.

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“power and care, which will demonstrate, “that I have not left you.” Some have said of the soul, that “the soul is where “it acts.” In that sense, I am sure, CHRIST is with his church on earth; He acts *in* it, as well as *for* it. He is the great head of influence to all his members, a fountain of *light and grace and life* to them. CHRIST *liveth in* them. And as it hath pleased the father, *that in him all fulness should dwell* *: so of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace †.

II. WE are next to enquire, who are *the persons*, to whom this promise is made. *I am with YOU.*

1.) IT certainly belonged in the *highest* and most *extraordinary* sense to the *eleven apostles*, to whom the words were immediately spoken. They were the persons most directly affected at that time, with the sad apprehension of their master's leaving them, after they had so long enjoyed his delightful *conversation*, and been happy under the direction and support of his *visible* influence and conduct. This was good news to them,

com-

* Col. i. 19.

† John i. 16.

with *his faithful ministers.* 19

comfortable words suitable to their melancholy circumstances; that though from this time, they should *see his face no more* after the flesh, yet HE would however be *effectually* present with them. They had uncommon difficulties now in view, to execute the commission their master had just given them; namely, to proselyte the world to the religion of CHRIST: and considering the state of things every where, and their own seeming unfitness for so great a work, they might well despair of success, if they should be left entirely to themselves: their compassionate master therefore assures them of his presence and gracious assistance, and that *as their day was so their strength should be;* his *grace* should be *sufficient* for them: all this is included in the promise of his *presence* with them. This speech of our Saviour's to his disciples was of the same import, with those gracious declarations, which the great GOD frequently made to his ancient servants, when he called them out to services of extraordinary difficulty. Thus, when *Moses* was sent into *Egypt*, and to bring up the children of *Israel* from thence, he pleads his own insufficiency in excuse; *Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I*

should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? But GOD animates him with this assurance, as containing every thing sufficient for him, *Certainly I will be with thee* *. The same encouragement GOD gave to *Jeremiah*, when he was afraid, how he should execute his prophetick commission in the degenerate age, in which he lived; *Be not afraid of their faces*, says GOD, *for I am with thee* †. In the same manner our blessed Lord encourages his apostles and *first* disciples here in the text.

2.) THOUGH this promise in the highest sense belonged to the *apostles*, who were to lay the foundation of the gospel-church; yet I am persuaded, that CHRIST designed it to affect *all the ministers* of the gospel in every succeeding age to the very end of time: and all such may from hence be assured, that CHRIST will be with them, to give them strength and effectual assistance, in proportion to the difficulties of their work, and the various purposes, which from time to time he has to serve by them.

THAT *ordinary* ministers in the christian church have an interest in this promise, is evident, both from the *nature of the work* here

* Exod. iii. 11, 12. † Jer. i. 8.

with *his* faithful *ministers*. 13

here specified, which is the business of all ministers as well as it was of the apostles, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach people what CHRIST has commanded.—— And this is evident also from the *duration* mentioned in the promise, *to the end of the world*; by which is meant, as I hope to make appear under the next head, the *utmost period of time*. Now as the apostles themselves were not to live so long, CHRIST must be understood in this promise to include all gospel ministers, succeeding in the sacred office in every age to the very end of the world.*

AND taking this for granted at present, I would here remark by the bye,

“THAT in every age the work of a
“gospel-minister would be very heartless
“and discouraging to all serious men, who
“in good earnest apply themselves to it, and
“are duely apprized of the grand impor-
“tance of it; were it not for this *gracious*
“*promise* of CHRIST in the *text*.” Here they ground their hope of *success*, and from hence they derive encouraging *support*.

THEY are sensible they *need* CHRIST's constant influences;——they go out in *this*,

as

* V. Grot. ad loc.

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as their might — and without *this* they would be, like *Sampson* without his locks, deprived of that wherein their greatest strength lies. — The exhortation given to *Timothy*, equally concerns every gospel-minister, *Be strong in the LORD and in the power of his might**. They therefore reckon it a great comfort, that their master has assured them, that he is *with them* to assist and help them in their work, as truly as he was with the *apostles* and *first* ministers of the christian church.

HE is with all faithful ministers, to direct and assist them, in all their *work* and in all their *difficulties*. They rely upon him accordingly for his influences and blessing: and if their sincere and well-meant labours prove successful they look upon it as an accomplishment of this promise, and they ascribe the glory of it to the presence and efficacy of CHRIST, *working together with them* by the HOLY SPIRIT. — Let me add,

3.) THIS promise may be considered as belonging also to *christian churches*. They are concerned in it, as they are the seat of a gospel-ministry, and the very end of its institution; and as all the *ordinances*, which

CHRIST

* 2 Tim. ii. 1.

with *his* faithful *ministers*. 15

CHRIST here appoints, Ware calculated for the service of christian churches, and to be statedly administred amongst them. The promise, tho' most *directly* made to ministers, has a *reference* to christian churches; and all the members thereof may derive comfort from it.—If CHRIST be with ministers, to fit them *for* their work and to assist them *in* it, will it not be greatly to the advantage of all those, who attend *upon* their ministrations. The more of his presence is with ministers, the more benefit will the people receive. Whilst he conveys His sweet influences to ministers, his people will feel the quickening warmth thereof, and gospel ordinances will come with more power and energy to their souls.

III. We are now to enquire into the extensive duration, to which this promise reaches; *alway, even unto the end of the world.*

WHAT reason have ministers to be thankful for this gracious promise! Oh how kind was it in our great master, to add such a clause, to relieve us under those desponding thoughts, which may at any time dishearten

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us in our work ! What a good master do we serve ! How mercifully does he provide for our encouragement and comfort ! And how cheerfully may every good minister go on in his work, with such a *promise* annexed to his *commission* !

I.) CHRIST will be with his ministers *to the end of the world*. — Some have endeavoured to wrest this promise out of the hands of *common ministers*, since the apostolical age. Hereby they not only deprive *us* of our chief support in our work ; but they also rob all *private christians* of their chief encouragement, in attending upon the ministry and ordinances of the gospel. For if CHRIST is not with us by the influences of his SPIRIT, our ministrations will not be very effectual to promote either the *comfort*, or the *improvement* of our hearers.

BUT I hope to make it appear, that the promise is made to *us*, and to those who shall *come after us* to the very end of time.

THE phrase here used *, strictly translated would be, *unto the finishing of the age* ; and with a view to destroy the notion of a gospel - ministry's being commissioned by

CHRIST

* Εως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.

with *his faithful ministers.* 17

CHRIST to last after the *apostolic age*, some have contended earnestly, that it signifies no more in the text, than *unto the end of that age or generation, wherein CHRIST spake the words.*

BUT this phrase is used in four other places only of the New Testament; and as it happens, all of them are in St. *Matthew*. And there is not any one of them, wherein, consistently with good sense, any thing can be understood, besides *the end of the world* strictly so called, or *the consummation of all things.*

— The phrase is three times in chap. xiii. — viz. ver. 39, 40, 49. all these places refer to *the last general judgment*, which will commence at *the end of the world*. The other passage is chap. xxiv. 3. where the disciples ask, when will be *the end of the world*? I believe none doubts, but their meaning in the question was, when *the end of all things would come*. And as these places evidently determine the *sense* of the phrase; so I am apt to think, there would have been little doubt, whether the expression did not signify *the end of the world*, in this passage as well as in the others; were it not for the zeal and fondness of some men to invalidate a gospel-ministry, and to hoot it out of the

D

world

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world as *no institution* of CHRIST, but a shameful *imposition* upon mankind *.

BESIDES; let us consider the *ground* of this phrase, as well as the *use* of it in the New Testament; and the matter will appear yet more evident. — The phrase alludes to a known division of time amongst the *Jews*: they divided all time into three ages [or *aeones*, the word in the text] *viz.*

THE age *before* the law;

THE age *under* the law; and

THE age of the MESSIAH:

THIS *last*, they reckoned, was to continue to *the end of the world*: therefore this is sometimes called the *last age*, or (which is equivalent) the *last days* †. CHRIST therefore is to be understood here, as promising to be with his ministers to *the end of the last age*, or of *the time of the MESSIAH's kingdom*; or in other words, to *the end of the world*, the end of all things, which is to conclude with the period of the MESSIAH's kingdom: for THEN cometh the end ‡.

CHRIST'S

* V. *Αἰών*, ap. Stockii clav. † Heb. i. 2.

‡ I Cor. xv. 24.

with *his faithful ministers.* 19

CHRIST's encouraging assurance therefore must amount to this; "that though one generation of *ministers* (as well as of other *people*) passes away and another comes; yet this promise shall still extend to those, who succeed in the *ministerial office*, and to the *churches* under their ministry, from age to age, till the commission shall expire at the end of all things." Our *law* says, that "the KING never dies;" so in a sense it may be said, that the *subjects* of this promise never die. Thus the experiences of *former ministers*, correspondent to this declaration of CHRIST, are a great relief to those who come *after them*: and the same LORD and *head* of the church, will not fail to dispense his influences to his *people*, by the ministry of the gospel in *future* times, as HE has done in those that are *past* and *gone*.

2.) CHRIST will be with us *always*, or through *all our days* unto the end of the world.

I CANNOT help borrowing a thought from Dr. *Whitby*, viz. "Had our LORD made this promise with relation to his

“ apostles only ; he would have said, *all*
 “ YOUR *days* [πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ὡς ὦν] *.”

THIS should be considered as a very emphatical *addition* ; and greatly enhances the value of the promise.

IT signifies not only the continuance of CHRIST'S influence from *one age to another*, according to the necessities of his church ; but also that his favour would be *without interruption* ; his care would be *continual* and *never intermitted* : both *ministers* and *people* should, *from day to day*, be the objects of his careful inspection ; he would *walk* continually amongst them, to give them all the help and comfort they should need.

IT may also import the continuance of CHRIST'S conduct thro' the *several periods* and *circumstances* of life : “ *always*, in every
 “ condition and situation : ”

IN *youth* ; at their first setting out in the world, and engaging in his service, ministers may expect (in virtue of this promise) that CHRIST *will be with them* ; — to form their minds to a fitness for their work ; — to introduce them into service ; — to procure acceptance for them ; — and by the
 steps

with *his faithful ministers.* 21

steps of his providence to direct them to stations of usefulness.

IN the *after-course* of their service, when they are got forward into life, CHRIST will *be with* his ministers;—to give them strength as their day is;—and to enable them in the most active and vigorous part of life, to bear *the heat and burden of the day.*

AND in time of *Old Age*, when infirmities encrease, and strength decays, CHRIST will *be with* them;—to compassionate their feebleness;—to support their spirits;—and to refresh them with the glorious prospect of approaching *rest*, and an inconceivable *reward* for all their faithful labours, awaiting them in the *heavenly* world: thither he is already *gone*; there he *expects* their arrival; and there he will give them a hearty welcome.

BEFORE I dismiss the *doctrinal* part of my subject; I beg leave to suggest two things, with reference to the *nature* and *tenour* of this promise in the text.

IT may be considered, both as *an absolute*, and as a *conditional* promise.

I.) IT is, no doubt, an *absolute* declaration, that CHRIST *will have* a church and
a mi-

a ministry to the end of time. In this view, it cannot be called a promise to any *particular* minister or people; or, that CHRIST will maintain a succession of *preachers* and *bearers* in any *particular place*. What a fine spot of ground was the lesser *Asia* heretofore! but—alas! the candlestick is removed; the glory is departed; their churches are demolished and lie in ruins; or are converted into mosques and temples for *Mahometan* superstition and vanities. The gospel may be transplanted from one place to another.

BUT CHRIST'S declaration in the text most assuredly intimates, that *some where or other* HE will have a church and ministry, as long as the world lasts; with whom he will constantly vouchsafe his most gracious presence. *The gates of hell shall never prevail against his church and interest, so as to extirpate it from the earth* *.

II.) IT must be understood, as a *conditional* promise, with reference to *particular* ministers and churches. It most certainly supposes duties to be performed on *their* part, in order to secure the continuance of CHRIST'S presence with them; and it amounts to what

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* Mat. xvi. 18.

with *his faithful ministers.* 23

Azariah the prophet declared to *Asa* the king of *Judah* and his people, “*the LORD* “*is with you, while ye be with him; and if* “*ye seek him, he will be found of you; but* “*if ye forsake him, he will forsake you*.*”

THUS ministers can depend upon CHRIST's being with them, *only* in a course of faithful endeavours to execute their commission; while they are with *him*, act as under his eye, and as desirous to approve themselves to him; while they set themselves conscientiously to do the work, which he has assigned them; give themselves in earnest to it; while they act with sincere aims to promote their master's interest, and to *save themselves and those that hear them*: while they labour with diligence to shew themselves *workmen, that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*, and faithfully dispensing ordinances in the way, which CHRIST has appointed:—And when they join to all this a humble sense of their own *insufficiency* for these things, and earnest *desires* of CHRIST's presence with them.—I say, while ministers behave *thus*; they may be assured, that CHRIST will be with them.—But the *slothful* and *negligent*, the *insincere* and *self-*
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* 2 Chron. xv. 2.

24 CHRIST *ever present*

sufficient have no reason to expect CHRIST's presence; they forsake *him*, and he will forsake *them*.

NOR can *professing christians* depend upon CHRIST's being with them; unless they have sincerely *given up* themselves to GOD *thro'* CHRIST, and so are the genuine *subjects* of his kingdom: they can *only* expect to find him, and to feel the beneficial influences of his grace and presence, when they seek him in the way of his own appointment, *i. e.* by a constant serious attendance upon gospel-ordinances, as *his institutions*; and as *means* appointed by him, to be the channels of conveying his grace to the children of men.

—But where people *keep out of* CHRIST's *fold*; neglect and disregard the ordinances of the gospel; as they evidently do not *desire*, so neither have they any grounds to *expect* his advantageous presence.—Let such remember however, that CHRIST is always with them, as an *observer* of their conduct; and the day is coming, when he will severely punish their *contemptuous* treatment of *him* and of his *institutions*.

with *his faithful ministers.* 25

IV. I WOULD now make a proper improvement of this subject, by way of APPLICATION.

AND this in a *threefold* respect,

BY way of *Examination* :

BY way of *Exhortation* : and

BY way of *Consolation*.

I. WHAT has been said, concerning this promise of CHRIST's *perpetual presence* with his *ministers* and his *churches*, may naturally lead us to a few *serious enquiries*

Q. I. WHAT of CHRIST's presence have we ever experienced in the course of our religious services?—*Ministers* and *private christians* may unite in this awful enquiry.—And as this can be determined only by the *fruits* and *effects*, let us *severally* enquire.

A. . . MINISTERS, in order to know what of CHRIST's *presence* they have had, may fitly enquire ;

WHAT pleasure and sweetness have we found in our work?—When we have been meditating upon holy things, and *pre-*
E *paring*

paring for the service of the sanctuary, how have our own hearts been impressed? What power and effect have gospel-truths had upon our own spirits? — Have we found the strong actings of love to God and to precious *souls* animating us in our *ministrations*? Have we gone out to our work, with earnest desires to reach the cases and consciences of our hearers, *to save souls from death*; and to stir them up to a due regard and attention to religion, as the grand business of life, *the one thing needful*? Have we endeavoured to possess them with a firm persuasion of *gospel-truths*, and to improve them in *practical godliness*? — As far as this has been the case, we have had CHRIST with us; even tho' we may not have had the *discernible success*, which we hoped for.

LET us also enquire; what *success* we may reasonably conclude we have had? —

IF we have had *any*: — let us with humble thankfulness make our acknowledgments to our gracious master; being sensible, that it was neither our *planting*, nor our *watering*, but CHRIST'S *presence* and blessing, which gave the increase. Not I, says St. Paul, but the grace of God, which was with me*.

IF

* I Cor. xv. 10.

with *his faithful ministers.* 27

IF we have had *little or no* success:—let us carefully enquire; whether this has not been owing to the *want of* such influences of CHRIST upon *our own* spirits, as I have just been speaking of:—and *if so*; let us think, what *fault* of ours hath separated between him and us; that so without delay we may recover ourselves, and regain his *efficacious influences* for our greater success.

B...As for you, who are HEARERS; let this be a day of enquiry with *you*; what of CHRIST's *presence* in his institutions have you experienced?

HAVE you to this day been prevailed upon, by gospel-ordinances, heartily to engage in serious *religion*, or not?—Have you found the *word* of GOD at any seasons powerful and piercing? Has *sin* ever appeared to you *exceeding sinful* and detestable? Has your *love* to GOD, to CHRIST and to your *fellow-saints*, been kindled and inflamed, by the representation of CHRIST's suffering, at a *sacramental* table?—Has your *attendance* on religious exercises excited and confirmed *pious resolutions* in your souls; so that you have gone away fully determined for GOD

and religion? And has your succeeding *behaviour* evidenced the sincerity of such resolutions?—These, as far as you can discern them, are the *best proofs*, that CHRIST has *been with you* in his ordinances.

Q. II. Do *we* experience a like influencing *presence* of CHRIST with us *now*, as in *former* times? Is it with us, as in days past?

WE *ministers*, in our work;
 YOU *people*, in your attendances.

—IF NOT—

WE should *severally* proceed to enquire; what is the cause of this decay and diminution?

IT is most certain, *no blame* can be imputed to CHRIST:—it must be owing to *ourselves*:—possibly we have been more insensible and forgetful of the necessity of his influences, than we *formerly* were;—and perhaps hereupon we have not fervently asked him to be with us, before we came to our religious exercises, as we *used* to do;—or, it may be (and I doubt it is often the case) we regard *this* or *that* minister, more than CHRIST'S *presence* with us; as if success
 were

with his faithful *ministers*. 29

were to be expected from a *particular agent*, more than from him, who is *LORD of the harvest*.

II. THE foregoing discourse points out to us some important *duties*, viz.

I. A CAREFUL and constant attendance upon a gospel-ministry, and upon all the ordinances which CHRIST has appointed in his house.

BLESSED is the man, that beareth wisdom, watching daily at her gates, waiting at the posts of her doors *. Where should sinners hope for converting grace, with so much reason, as where the Saviour has promised his presence? And where should saints expect their improvement in grace, holiness and comfort so much, as where CHRIST is present with his refreshing influences?

2. AN affectionate regard to all faithful ministers, for their *works* sake, and their *master's* sake †.

THIS is expected by our blessed LORD, and is what all faithful ministers are entitled to.

* Prov. viii. 34. † 1. Thess. v. 13.

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to. — But I forbear insisting upon a point, so exceeding nice, in the present age of *light* and *knowledge*, when the ministers of the gospel are *despised*, and *reproached* to the last degree. I pray GOD make us *faithful* in our great MASTER's service; and then we may be assured, that when HE shall come in all his glory, we shall *receive a crown of life*, and shall *shine as the sun in the kingdom of our father*; when those who make *light of the gospel*, shall be *cast into outer darkness*, where is *weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth*, forever *.

3. A PECULIAR concern to secure CHRIST's *presence* with us, in all our attendances on *gospel-institutions*.

WE should do our utmost for that purpose;

1.) BY ardent and constant prayer to CHRIST for his gracious influences. CHRIST has *promised* his presence, and is *ready* to *afford* it; but nevertheless, *for this thing will HE be sought to*.

2.) BY

* Mat. xxii. 13.

with *his faithful minister.* 31

2.) By seriously and carefully attending to what we are about; having our hearts closely engaged.

3.) By a diligent endeavour, to remove whatever might hinder CHRIST from coming to us, or obstruct the communication of his grace and favour †.

ALLOW me under this head of *Exhortation* to add,

4. THE promise of the text may direct christian churches, how to conduct themselves, when they are to fix upon a stated ministry amongst them.

AND here I would suggest *three* things,

1.) THEY should unite their solemn and earnest prayers to the LORD of the *harvest*, the *head* of the *church*, that he would direct them in the choice of a minister, *a man after his own heart.* Comparatively speaking, there are but few *faithful labourers*; pray therefore the LORD of the *harvest*, that he would send *one of the few* to that part of his *vineyard* and church, where your lot is cast *.

2.) THEY

† 1 Pet. ii. 1.

* Mat. ix. 38.

2.) THEY should principally aim at determining and fixing upon *such a minister*, as they may hope shall have CHRIST's special *presence* with him. A man of *serious religion*, and heartily set for promoting the love and fear of GOD in the souls of men: a man of *strict piety*, and an *unblameable conversation*, and a *scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of HEAVEN* — May I be allowed to say, that views of friendship, or particular acquaintance should have little or no place here: no man should be *preferred* on this account *only*; he should in all other respects at least *equal* those, who are mentioned upon the same occasion *.

I BE-

* How happy would it be, if those who have the right of electing, or the power of nominating ministers to particular places, in the *Established church*, would attend to this rule, and prefer *such* ministers *only*, as they have reason to think will conscientiously discharge their duty! What a blessed *reformation* might we promise ourselves from hence! — Unless some care be taken in this affair, it is to be feared we shall see the nation sinking still deeper and deeper into irreligion and immorality; and this will be a *very unsuitable* return to GOD, who has in a most astonishing manner delivered us from our enemies and put them to shame who were risen up against us. Our late amazing deliverance from a most unnatural rebellion, I am sure, loudly calls upon all ranks and degrees of men in the nation, to *amend their ways*.

I BELIEVE, nothing has a more fatal tendency to harden men in their sins, than the *irregular lives* of those, who bear a *sacred* character: these are thought to give a sort of sanction to the vices of other men; and will at least entirely hinder the good effect of the most nervous and moving discourses: for what good can a minister be capable of doing, whose doctrine is a perpetual satyr upon his own life; let such an own *preach* like an *angel*, it will be to little purpose, if he *lives* like a *devil*. “A minister without holiness (says bishop *Bull*) will sooner damn his own soul, than save any one’s else.” And I remember, St. *Chrysostome* makes this terrible remark, “that of all the persons he had known converted, he never knew a wicked priest converted.”

How melancholy a consideration is it, that any who are by office bound to *teach* men the way of *salvation*, should by a profligate and loose life lead them into the ways of *sin* and *destruction*; and run into all the luxury and excess, which the most abandoned sinners can do! What a dreadful account will such have to give another day!

THOSE who *preach* to others, should be thorough christians themselves; and have their

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hearts set upon promoting serious, vital godliness, all the ways they can. They should recommend strict religion by the *holiness* of their *lives*, as well as by the *purity* of their *doctrine*; they should always bear their testimony against those *diversions* and *amusements* and *gayeties* of life, which eat out the vitals of religion, abate a regard to the things of God, introduce levity and vanity into the mind, and make men neglectful of their everlasting concerns.

YOUNG persons especially are in danger of receiving mischief from such things; and therefore they should be warned to avoid them; and not be prompted to them by the *example*, or *connivance* of their *spiritual* guides, representing them as *innocent recreations*, instead of (what they *really* are) most *bewitching* and *hazardous snares*. It is no wonder, if young persons should be fond of *such* teachers now; because they *prophecy smooth things*, such as are suitable to their *inclinations* and *gay tempers*: but it is well, if many have not cause to *curse* them to all eternity.

THE *Jews* have a saying, "that when
"the shepherd is angry with the sheep, he
"places over them a blind guide." It looks indeed like a token of God's displeasure
against

against us, and seems to be a dreadful prognostick of approaching judgments; that there are amongst us *many* imployed in the *sacred office*, whose *lives* are notoriously *immoral*; a standing *disgrace* to their *function*, and of very *bad influence* on others. This is one of the crying sins of the *present age*, and *because of this the land mourneth*.

I PRAY GOD give all his *ministers* grace to be *faithful*; and may they so preach and so live, as to *save themselves*, and those that *bear them*! And may all ministers of a different cast and disposition always find it *difficult*, if not *impossible*, to be preferred in the christian church!

3.) THEY should be very careful, that they do not enter upon such a *settlement* and *choice*, with any thing in their *tempers* or *conduct*, that may be likely to occasion CHRIST's not vouchsafing his *gracious presence* with them.

DISSENSIONS, quarrels and animosities will have this fatal tendency.

WHENEVER therefore any *society* of christians are called to the choice of a *minister* amongst them; they would do well to consider St. *Paul's* advice to the *Corinthians*,

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as directed to them. “Finally, brethren, farewell; be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the GOD of Peace shall be with you *.”

III. WHAT has been said, suggests some arguments of *comfort* to faithful *ministers* and sincere *christians*; and that in a *variety of cases*, which would otherwise be very *discouraging*; namely,

1.) IN the want of CHRIST's *visible* presence.—This was *soon* to be the case of the *disciples*, to whom CHRIST immediately directed this promise; their MASTER was in a *short time* to leave them, and in a *visible* shape or form to be seen by them no more:—and this is the case of *all christians*, in the succeeding ages of the world, ever since CHRIST returned up into *heaven*.

2.) UPON the *death* of particular useful *ministers*.—Tho' one and another of these die, yet CHRIST is *still* with his faithful servants.—He will be with those, who enter upon their labours;—At their *first setting out* in the work of the ministry; to
encou-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

with *his* faithful *ministers*. 37

encourage their *hearts* and strengthen their *hands*;—And in all the *trials* and *discouragements*, they may meet with in the *after-part* of *life*.—Once more,

3.) WHEN the state of the church is melancholy and *religion* is at a *low ebb*; the consideration of this promise will contribute much to our comfort.—More of the presence of CHRIST, and larger effusions of his SPIRIT, will soon change the *aspect*, and create a *pleasing brightness*; and *these* we have foundation to expect: for HIS interest will never quite be extinguished as long as the world lasts; and *in the mount of the LORD* it shall be *seen*: when matters are carried almost to the last extremity, then will CHRIST *appear*; and by his bright and reviving beams this *sun of righteousness* will scatter the dark clouds, and make a *joyous day*.—In every *melancholy season* therefore, let us direct our eyes and prayers to our *great* and *kind* MASTER; let us plead *his own* promise with him, and we need not be disheartened: HE will be with us, and appear for our help and joy, and give us *strength equal to our day*.

THIS is what CHRIST has engaged in the text; and he cannot be worse than his,
word,

word; nor will he ever disappoint the *regular hopes* of his servants. *LO!* take notice of what I here promise; *behold, admire, and take the comfort of it:* you may be assured, that *I am with you alway even to the end of the world;* you shall have my *spiritual presence* with you, to the *end of time and without intermission.* Here is added, AMEN!

WHICH is a word of great importance, and may be considered in a *double view;*

EITHER as *added by CHRIST* at the end of his commission to the apostles: and then it is, as his setting his hand and seal to his solemn engagement to be with them; *Amen!* “so it shall most certainly be; I the
“AMEN, the faithful and true witness, who
“cannot deceive you, do expressly declare,
“that you shall alway find me *present with*
“you, according to my word.”

OR; this AMEN may be supposed to be added by the evangelist St. Matthew; who was one of the *apostles*, to whom the promise was immediately made: and then the word represents, the apostle's hearty and thankful resting on the promise; *Amen, so be it, so let it be;* “LORD thou hast said for the
“encouragement of faithful ministers, I am
“with you alway: AMEN! be it unto
“thy

with *his* faithful *ministers*. 39

“ thy servants according to this word: thy
“ presence we most earnestly *ask*; and now
“ with firm hope we *expect* it, in pursuance
“ of thy gracious promise.”

WITH what chearfulness may every *faithful minister* of CHRIST engage, and proceed in the work of the gospel, with such an assurance from his great MASTER, given on purpose for our *support* and *comfort*.

LET US build upon this word of grace, and turn it into a prayer; humbly imploring CHRIST'S *presence* with us, who have been for any *length of time* engaged in this sacred work; as well as with you, who are now solemnly by prayer, and *laying on of the hands of the presbytery* [the *primitive* and *scriptural* method of *ordination*] to be solemnly *set apart* for this *sacred office*.

“ — MAY JESUS CHRIST, the great
“ shepherd of the sheep, the Saviour of
“ men, the author and finisher of our
“ faith, grant to all of us, his *spiritual*
“ and *friendly* and *efficacious* presence and
“ influences; to *assist* us in all the parts
“ of ministerial duty; to *strengthen*,
“ *comfort* and *establish* us against all
“ opposition of men or devils; and to
“ give

"give us abundant *success*; that we may,
 "in our several stations, *fulfill* our *mini-*
stry, and be the happy instruments of
 "helping many in the way to heaven!"

"AND when we have *served* God
 "and our generation according to the
 "will of GOD, and shall *fall asleep*;
 "may we be received into paradise, and
 "have a crown of *life, righteousness*
 "and *glory* put upon us by our dear
 "MASTER, in token of our *fidelity*; and
 "so may we ever be with the LORD!"

"AMEN!"

A HYMN.

We humbly trust the promise, Lord,
To all our souls makes good this word:

MAY MINISTERS AND PEOPLE TOO,

Guided by thee, know what to do.

H Y M N.

V.

May we thy faithful servants be;

" **G**O preach my Gospel, *said the Lord,*

" Bid the *whole earth* my grace receive;

" Baptize *new converts* in God's name;

" Happy are they, who shall *believe*.

II.

" Teach them to do my holy will;

" To them make known all my commands;

" *Fear not*, for I will you defend;

" All pow'r is lodged in my hands.

III.

" *I'm with you*, till the *world* shall end;

" Each faithful minister shall find,

" My *gracious presence* with him is;

" To cheer his *soul*, and guide his *mind*."

A H Y M N.

IV.

WE humbly trust *thy promise*, LORD;
To all *our* souls make good this word;
May MINISTERS and PEOPLE too,
Guided by thee, *know* what to do,

V.

May WE thy faithful servants be;
Our *time*, and *powers* for thee employ:
That, when CHRIST comes to *judge the world*,
We may *behold his face* with joy!

AMEN!

II.

F I N I S.

III.